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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WEB COURSE TRAINS  
PROVIDERS IN HEALTH CARE GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has developed a Web-based training course for public and private health care providers to learn the Bright Futures Guidelines for supervising the care of their infant, child and adolescent patients. The guidelines emphasize prevention, and family involvement. The goal is to foster awareness of the child's next phase of development and to focus on what needs to be done to keep the child healthy and safe.

VDH partnered with the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services and Virginia Commonwealth University to create the online course, called "Promoting Child and Adolescent Health: Bright Futures and EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment)." Physicians, nurse practitioners, clinic nurses, school nurses, dentists, social workers and dietitians are urged to access the course at [www.vcu-cme.org/bf](http://www.vcu-cme.org/bf).

Bright Futures Guidelines, which were created by more than 70 national professional organizations, are consistent with those of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The guidelines are meant to alter the interaction between doctors and children from a focus on treatment to a broader framework that promotes the physical, emotional, mental and social well being of children. The guidelines encourage health professionals to build partnerships with families so that each visit becomes an opportunity to assess the child's development over time, and to educate and support the family and child in developing healthy, lifelong habits.

"The guidelines address the emerging disease prevention and health promotion needs of young children," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. "They outline best practices for child and adolescent care and help providers improve the way they care for their young patients."

Nationally, Virginia has been a leader in the statewide adoption and promotion of Bright Futures Guidelines. The health commissioner adopted them in 2001 as Virginia's standards for all children's health care. Over the past five years, VDH has provided introductory training in Bright Futures to school nurses and to VDH staff including nurses, nutritionists and dentists. The guidelines also have been distributed to pediatricians, home-visiting programs and child day care workers.

The guidelines address the new health risks that threaten children and families today. These include chronic conditions among children such as asthma, obesity and complications of early sexual activity. Current challenges to children's health status include the links between poverty and limited access to health care, between prenatal risks and low birth-weight babies, nutrition and school performance, and between substandard housing and lead poisoning.

(more)

“The Bright Futures Guidelines focus on an individual child’s needs, which the provider can discuss with the family or care giver and identify community resources and solutions that fit with the family’s values and goals,” said Dr. Linda Meloy, associate professor of pediatrics at the VCU Medical Center.

The Web course is divided into six segments, and can be completed in about seven hours. One section teaches participants how to apply Bright Futures Guidelines to their practices and is particularly helpful for those who serve high-risk families. Other segments include an overview of Bright Futures, developmental assessments, medical assessment, immunization and screening, and tools to help put Bright Futures into practice.

Helping parents protect the health of their children is a prime objective of VDH’s Office of Family Health Services. Its 50 preventive health programs touch the lives of Virginians across the span of their lifetime. Central to its efforts is the concept that a healthy lifestyle is not a luxury, it is a lifesaver. For more information about Bright Futures and other programs in the Office of Family Health Services, visit [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) and click on Healthy Living.

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